Completed Pollution Prevention Project Case Study

United States Department of Energy
Office of Environmental Management
Fact Sheet

Empty Drum Reuse Project

Los Alamos National Laboratory

Original Problem

Drums contain residual material after they are empty, and they must be treated as hazardous waste if they are not triple rinsed. The steel drums were melted down into new drums or products, but no recycling path exists for the plastic drums.

The Project Solution

The intact drums are all sent to the Western Container Company in Denver, CO, where they are cleaned, reconditioned, and sold. This is a more efficient, direct, and less energy intensive way of recycling the steel drums than melting them down to make other products. This allows plastic drums to be reused instead of disposed of as hazardous waste.

Value of Improvement

So far over 5000 drums ranging from 5 gallons to 110 gallons from four technical areas have been sent to the Western Container Company. This procedural change has eliminated over 26,500 kg of hazardous waste and saved over $300,000 to date.

Lifecycle Waste Reduction	
Lifecycle Waste Reduction	>26,500kg of Haz. Waste
Commencement Date	1999
Project Useful Life (Years)	Indefinite

DOE Monetary Benefits	
Total Project Cost	NA
Lifecycle Savings	>$300,000 to date
Return on Investment	NA

Benefits At-A-Glance

- LANL has eliminated over 26,500 kg of hazardous waste and saved over $300,000 since the project began.
- Plastic drums can now be reused instead of treated as hazardous waste.
- It is cheaper to recondition and reuse steel drums instead of melting them down for use in new products.

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Summary Data	
Priority Area:	Waste Minimization Projects
Project Type:	Source Reduction
Total Project Cost:	NA
Lifecycle Savings:	>$300,000 to date
Implementing Group:	FWO-SWO
Benefiting Group:	FWO-SWO
Useful Life Years:	Indefinite
Return on Investment:	NA
Lifecycle Waste Reduction:	>26,500 kg of hazardous waste empty drums to date
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